Completion of Training Following Prolonged Periods of Absence from Training

When the current MRCGP components were introduced there was some concern, particularly with reference to workplace-based assessments, about the process of completing training and assessments (ARCP recommendations) for doctors in training who had been absent for prolonged periods of time and on return only required a short period of training to complete the programme.

Following recent email discussions between Deanery Assessment Leads group and some members of COGPED it appears that the consensus advice to be recommended to deaneries is:

- It would not be fair or reasonable to expect an extension to the 3 year training programme for all doctors returning to training from a prolonged period of absence unless the period of absence is greater than 12 months in total (for example, where leave or sickness is added to maternity leave). In these circumstances it would be expected that a period of additional training would be necessary to allow adequate time for the Educational Supervisor to assess the doctor’s competencies. We would anticipate that this period might usually be of three months duration.

- Each trainee will be known locally by their Educational Supervisor and Programme Director and will have their own narrative and evidence base. Therefore individual cases will need to be assessed on their own merits on the basis of the Educational Supervisor’s considered judgment and by taking advice from the Deanery where necessary.

- The fair approach is to allow an ARCP panel to proceed on the expected date (approx. two months before the end of the training date) and to allow the panel to review the available evidence of the last 12 months in training (which would be the ST3 year/or pro-rata). This will include an up to date report from the Educational Supervisor written no earlier than two months before the panel review.

- Following periods of prolonged absence from training, the Educational Supervisor’s report may be based on evidence in the trainee’s ePortfolio that might not have been updated for many months. The Educational Supervisor can rate the trainee as being competent if they are satisfied that the trainee had gained all the necessary competences during their training programme and that during their absence from training their competence levels will not have fallen. If the Educational Supervisor is unable to confidently confirm that a trainee’s competence is satisfactory then he/she should request a formal panel review.

- If the ARCP Panel decides that there is sufficient evidence to confirm that the trainee has gained all the required competences for the completion of training (which includes their own review of the trainee’s ePortfolio as well as the results of the Educational Supervisor's report) and all other MRCGP components have been passed then a successful completion of training has been achieved. For any absence periods over six months, the ARCP form must contain a statement confirming that the Deanery is satisfied that the trainee will not have lost their skills. If the evidence does not allow the panel to reach this positive conclusion, the panel recommendation will be for an extension to training.
• Where there are multiple absences from training in a condensed period of time not allowing the trainee to return to work for a reasonable period of time to enable formal assessment, there would need to be a specific statement on the ARCP form stating that competences have been achieved despite the fragmented training with supporting evidence (for example, if a trainee was absent for 12 months, then returned part time for four months and was then absent again for 12 months).

• There must be the appropriate “training” gap between ARCPs; the GMC would not expect to see two ARCPs straddling a period of absence apparently demonstrating progression but where no additional training had in fact taken place in the interval. For example an ARCP with satisfactory progress on the day before maternity leave followed by an ARCP two months before the end of training (whilst on maternity leave) demonstrating that competences have been fully met. In this case there has not been any training time in between the two ARCPs. In these circumstances the final ARCP would need to include the statement: ‘The trainee gained all the competences for completion of training before the period of absence commenced however we were unable to recommend outcome 6 at this point in the training as it was greater than two months before the completion of training date’

• A trainee may work for up to a maximum of 10 keeping in touch (KIT) days during her maternity leave. The work does not have to be consecutive and can include training or other activities which enable the employee to keep in touch with the workplace. These keeping in touch days do not normally count towards the 36 months training requirement (see appendix)

This guidance is in-keeping with COGPED’s original position on this issue.
Appendix

If the deanery wishes to include KIT days in the 36 month training requirement then they would be required to make a case per trainee in support of the KIT days and the following evidence would be required:

- dates of KIT days
- number of hours worked each day
- reason that they are needed to make up training
- description of trainer and panel authenticated evidence of training-related activity (e.g. learning log entry)

The trainee may also choose to take an exam on a KIT day if supported by the deanery.